**Three essential rules for succeeding in college**

By PHILIP FREEMAN • August 24, 2010 - Guest column on Editorial page.

Fall is in the air and across the nation thousands of students are getting ready to begin their first year of college. If you're one of them or know someone who is, let me give you three simple rules to guarantee success in the classroom.

**1. Go to class.**

Ever since your first day of kindergarten, when your mom tearfully sent you off with a kiss and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, everyone has been telling you that you have to go to school. But in college, no one will make you go to class. The college president will not call your parents nor will most professors bother to track you down. But your professors will notice. Even in large lecture courses, your absence will become evident by your poor test scores if not by your empty seat. In smaller courses and seminars, skipping class is like wearing a flashing red sign on your head that says: Please give me a bad grade.

**2. Read the books.**

You can't do well in college without reading the books. And I don't mean just skimming a textbook like you would a magazine article, but really working through material in an organized and productive way. Whether you're doing calculus or Shakespeare, you have to put your heart into it. College professors will actually expect you to have read the assigned material for a course. It could be that you'll work through 50 pages of dull material and none of it will be on the exam or that last-minute handout that you stuffed in your backpack may be the focus of the whole test. You never really know, so always do the assignments.

**3. Talk to your professors.**

During my first year of college, I was terrified of speaking with my professors. What would I say to someone with a Ph.D. from Harvard? But most college teachers genuinely enjoy talking with students and are glad to help you with any problems you might be having in their classes. Professors can also be valuable guides in your college career if you let them and provide crucial references when you apply for jobs, internships or graduate schools. You are spending way too much money on your education to be afraid of your professors, so give us a chance to help you. After all, we used to be students too.

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